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ABSTRACT

Multicultural growth in teachers is measured through their level of cultural self-awareness, their emotional response to difference, their mode of cultural interaction, and whether their teaching approach is ethnocentric or multicultural. Overt racial issues in education include racial differences in standardized testing, gifted and remedial placement, academic tracking, and dropout rates. These differences typically discriminate against children of color. Covert racial issues in education encompass negative teacher attitudes about children. Factors that influence teacher expectations include students': (1) ethnicity; (2) gender; (3) socioeconomic status; (4) past achievement; (5) personality; (6) seat in the classroom; (7) attractiveness; (8) handwriting; (9) speech characteristics; and (10) combinations of these characteristics. Covert racial issues in education require that teacher interactions with children of color be monitored for balance in positive and negative reactions, frequency, level of nonverbal communication, differences in grouping patterns, labeling, and reaction time. In addition, inclusion of a multicultural curriculum is of utmost importance in rectifying covert racism in education. Finally, teachers need to demonstrate sensitivity to racial issues and to involve all parents in school activities. (VL)

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Racial Issues In Education: Real or Imagined?

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Agenda

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Racial Issues In Classrooms: Real or Imagined?

(The Role of Teachers)

In this presentation, we will discuss both overt and covert racial issues in education. We refer to overt issues as "real" issues since they are well documented and discussed in the literature. Covert issues will be referred to as "imagined" since they are often very subtle and not always clear. In fact, as we noted in Young Children, many people think that these issues are harmless and insignificant and should be ignored or overlooked (Boutte, LaPoint, & Davis, 1993). The reader can decide if these issues are real or imagined as issues are discussed. All of the issues deal with familiar concepts; yet, they are often seemingly forgotten in practice.

We want to readily note that we are sensitive and understand that the discussion of racial issues often causes discomfort for many people. Louise Derman Sparks, author of the Anti-Bias Curriculum, often muses that racial issues are handled like the "emperor's new clothes." In the classic children's book, The Emperor's New Clothes," everybody knew that the emperor did not have any clothes on, but no one told him because it was not polite to do so. Similarly, in our society we have been taught that it is not polite to discuss racial issues --especially in certain geographic regions.

In classroom settings, issues regarding racial differences are likely to emerge. Although multicultural classrooms address both similarities and differences among people, many feel more comfortable discussing similarities. Indeed, as humans, we share numerous similarities such as the need for food, shelter, and love. Most of us also probably share commonalities in our school experiences as well. However, vast differences are intricately intertwined with our similarities. Differences

in the manner that we meet our basic needs afffect our worldview and experiences. The primary focus of our discussion will be on racial differences; however, it will be difficult ast times to limit our discussion to racial differences. Although there are undoubtedly many other types of differences that are related in a complex way, a detailed discussion of these is beyond the scope of this paper.

As we develop multiculturally, it becomes easier to discuss racial and other differences. Before discussing covert and over racial issues, we will examine stages of multicultural development as a framework for subsequent discussion. Since self-assessment is an important aspect of multicultural growth, the reader should focus on where she/he is in terms of the stages.

Insert Table 1 about here

Level of Self Awareness

As indicated on Table 1, self awareness progresses from being unidimensional to ultimately being multidimensional. That is, during Stage One, one might feel that there is only one way to do something. Since we are reared from a particular cultural orientation and primarily view our experiences from this perspective, it is not surprising that most of us have a unidimensional perspective. During Stage One, conformity to cultural norms are stressed and often one laughs or ostracizes people whose perspectives are different. One of our favorite examples which illustrates this stage is when I (Boutte) was growing up and ate certain foods and used certain phrases that were unique to my community. Although I often read about other perspectives or viewed them on television, I often thought that they were peculiar. Since they differed

from my life experiences, it did not occur to me that my own idiosyncratic cultural perspectives were equally strange to others. While attending college in another state, I remember musing out loud that I had a taste for boiled peanuts. Yes, *boiled* peanuts! Everybody laughed and after some discussion, all of us were somewhat shocked to discover that each had unique cultural perspectives and behaviors that we cherished that were totally unfamiliar to others. For example, a friend from Florida mentioned eating mangoes which we thought was funny. Needless, to say, such experiences prodded us to be a little more openminded and helped us move to Stage Two. When (or if) we reach Stage Three, we realize that cultural perspectives are dynamic rather than static. We also learn to respect different perspectives.

Emotional Response to Differences

As mentioned earlier, many people deny that our differences are just as pronounced as our similarities. Teachers in Stage One often make comments such as: "When I look at children I don't see any differences." The general idea expressed here is that all children are bascially the same. Although the presumed intent of teachers who recite this phrase is that they treat all children equally, it also implies that we can disregard cultural differences and teach all children the same. Typically, this translates into treating all children as though they are European American. Such an attitude guides teachers to overlook cultural, racial, and other differences which may affect children's learning styles, development, perspectives, and behaviors. Emotionally, teachers who focus soley on similarities often fear that discussing differences indicates prejudice. Therefore, they deny that differences exist. However, when we reach Stage Three, we realize that differences, as well as similarities, should be celebrated. In fact, we recognize that differences can be assets which

can be used to facilitate children's development.

Mode of Cultural Interaction

In Stage One, people tend to interact primarily with people who are similar to them in some aspect. In schools, it is not uncommon to see children playing or sitting together with others who share the same ethnic group, gender, socioeconomic status, or some other similarity. In our society, frequent, prolonged interactions do not occur cross culturally in many settings. People often live, relax, and worship with people who are similiar to themselves so it is no wonder that people tend to isolate themselves. Presently, cross-cultural hostility (e.g., racial, religious, gender) is on the rise in this country and others. As we develop and expand our attitudes and reach Stage Three, we are capable of transforming the nature of our cultural interactions and maintaining rewarding relationships with others who may be culturally different from ourselves. No longer will our relationships be restricted to intracultural interactions.

Approach To Teaching

As we progress from Stage One to Stage Three, we move from an ethnocentric/Eurocentric approach to teaching to an authentic multicultural approach. For example, we no longer teach about events like Christopher Columbus from a Eurocentric perspective; rather, we research other perspectives and include them in our presentations as well. We learn *about* other cultures such as Native Americans and *from* them as well.

The process of growing multiculturally is an ongoing process which involves risk taking since we have to move out of our comfort zones. However, the ultimate personal and professional gain is worth the effort. Using the framework of multicultural stages, we will now discuss overt

and covert issues in education.

I. Real (Overt) Issues in Education

Most will agree that the four issues discussed here (testing, student placement, tracking, and dropout rates) are ones which illustrate apparent racial differences. Therefore, we refer to them as "real" racial issues.

A. Testing

It is generally acknowledged that African, Native, and Latino American children score less well on standardized tests than do other groups. Many people accept these differences as an inevitable fact of life. However, the inequities surrounding differential performance need to be addressed. Asa Hilliard (1991) points out that our schools are so caught up in testing children that we have seemingly forgotten about *teaching* them. We would rather, he adds, blame and embarrass school children for low test scores instead of teaching and nourishing them. As early childhood educators, we know that standardized testing does not provide much insight about how children learn. Yet, testing remains a real issue in education that points to serious racial differences nationally and frequently has devastating results for children of color.

B. Placement (Remedial/GiftedClasses)

Another overt issue that is closely related to testing is student placement. Children's placements are also often divided among racial lines with children of color more likely to be placed in remedial classes and white children in gifted classes. Jacqueline Irvine (1990) notes that many schools use testing under the guise of providing objectivity and accountablity. It is not uncommon to find that persistent parents often (subjectively) influence children's placement (Irvine, 1990). In her research, Irvine (1990) found a number of students in advanced classes

whose transcripts did not warrant their placement. Hence, if parents do not know how to play the placement "game," their children may end up in remedial classes throughtout their school career. Moreover, children who are placed in remedial classes often receive low level, skill-based instruction and, in turn, score poorly on subsequent tests and remain in remedial or low ability classes. "Gifted" children, on the other hand, often receive higher level instruction and, hence, do well on tests and remain in such classes which stress critical skills and thinking.

C. Tracking

It is evident that the test - placement - test sequence becomes self-perpetuating and students often are placed in a high ability (gifted) or low ability (remedial) track early in their school careers and remain there throughout their school careers. For this reason, tracking and ability grouping are generally not recommended in early childhood classes. However, there is nothing inherently wrong with the concept of tracking. In fact, it is logical to teach children based on their ability levels. The problem arises when children are essentially locked into categories that often influence their future school and life success. As we will illustrate later, teacher expectations are closely related to tracking.

D. Dropout Rates

There is a wealth of data which illuminate the unequivocal differences in dropout rates by race. They are consistently higher for children of color. Regardless of the reasons for these differences, they remain real racial issues that need to be addressed.

II. Covert Racial Issues (Imagined?)

The overt issues mentioned above are not shocking and are widely

discussed and acknowledged by most educators. However, despite the abundance of data by Brophy and Good (1970), Good & Brophy (1987) and others, many educators that we meet are unaware and unwilling to fully acknowledge the significant role that covert issues play on the overt issues mentioned earlier (testing, placement, ability grouping, and dropout rates). Six issues that the literature indicates are closely related to the overt differences are: A) Teacher attitudes, B) Teacher Expectations, C) Teacher-Child Interactions, D) Curriculum Relevance/Inclusion, E) Sensitivity to Racial Issues, and F) Parent-School Interactions. Most people would not argue that these "covert" issues are important; however, many doubt that they are as powerful as we suggest. Educators in stage one on the multicultural chart (Table 1) often believe that all children have an equal chance at success in school. They postulate that most of the racial issues suggested are "imagined," "blown way out of proportion," or easily overcome. We disagree. We know firsthand that the results of covert actions and attitudes are powerful and have a cumulative effect on children's futures.

A. Teacher Attitudes (Societal attitudes)

Societal attitudes and images from the media, communities, etc. which convey negative information about various racial groups (e.g., African American criminals or welfare recipients) undoubtedly affect the attitudes we hold about various racial groups. The prevailing attitudes and images are mind boggling. Unless we make a conscious effort to become multicultural, it is difficult to do because many of our attitudes have not been challenged. Additionally, since most teachers enter the teaching profession to help children, they often feel that they do not have any biases which may be damaging to students. Yet, we all have biases that need to be acknowledged and reflected upon. Most educators view

ourselves as teachers who provide all children with an equal chance for success. However, upon careful examination of our attitudes and actions, we sometimes discover that our biases have crept into the classrooms unbeknownst to us. Jones and Derman Sparks (1989) note that whether we damage children's self-esteem intentionally or not, the effect is still the same. It is debilitating to the children and the long term effect of institionalized racism is negative and cumulative. Educators must engage in the continuous process of examining our behaviors.

Teachers often hold negative attitudes about children of color (Steele, 1992). Incidentally, these negative teacher attitudes are not unique to white teachers. Because our society has traditionally been viewed from a Eurocentric perspective, teachers of color are equally as likely to hold negative attitudes about children of color. Again, we emphasize that, for the most part, the attitudes are not intentional and may not be recognized by teachers.

Often when teachers' and school officials' awareness levels progress to Stage Two on Table 1, we look for curricula materials and activities to make our classroom more inclusive and less biased. However, in addition to focusing on curricular materials, it is equally as important (and certainly more difficult) to examine our attitudes and biases which often reflect our belief system and values. Asa Hilliard often notes how it is easier to blame the curriculum for its shortcomings than to examine ourselves. Actions speak louder than anything we say or any curricula materials we may share. Because of societal attitudes that we bring to class, we may hold differential expectations for children from different racial groups. Hence, some children receive more fair treatment than others. Children are very adept at detecting hidden messages even when they are carefully camouflaged by smiles and kind words.

B. Teacher Expectations

We want to stress that teacher expectations have a subtle, but powerful effect on students. Although we readily acknowledge that children's success in school is due to a number of complex factors (e.g., home environments, personalities), we urge teachers to recognize the power they have over their students' destinies. The notion of a self-fulfilling prophecy is frequently discussed in educational circles; however, it is seemingly easily forgotten in practice. Negative self-fulfilling prophecies are often initially false, but a series of events causes them to be true. When children learn that teachers expect little from them and, they provide expected responses. Teacher expectations are closely related to differences in overt issues such as ability grouping. Lindfors (1989) notes that "What one sees depends on how one looks." If we view children's ethnicities as assets, then we build on them and recognize strengths. If, on the other hand, we see their cultures as deficits, then we fail to recognize, acknowlege, and encourage positive attributes. Moreover, we may view cultural traits as weaknesses.

After a comprehensive examination of schools across the nation, Claude Steele (1992) concluded that the culprit of school failure among African American children is the devaluation that the children face. Steele found that the effect of years of low teacher expectations are still evident when students reach college. Children's race and a number of factors influence teacher expectations. The subsequent section discusses many of these factors gleaned from the literature although the list is not intended to be an exhaustive one (Brophy & Good, 1970; Good & Brophy, 1987; Irvine, 1990). Additionally, many of the factors are confounded and it is difficult to seperate them.

Factors that InfluenceTeacher Expectations

1. Ethnicity -- Teachers frequently hold lower expectations for children of color than European American children (presumably because of what they know about children's ethnic groups from society). Paradoxically, many teachers in Stage One (Table 1) adhere to a "colorblind theory" and maintain that race does not affect their expectations. For some teachers this is true; for many others, the literature informs us otherwise.

2. Gender -- Recently, on television, we have seen instances where the American Association of University Women's (AAUW) research findings on gender bias were shared with teachers. Many teachers found the data hard to believe. When teachers agreed to be videotaped, they were surprised to discover that they had indeed called on boys more frequently or that they held different expectations for males and females (based on televised accounts aired on "The Oprah Winfrey Show" and "60 Minutes" (or "20/20" -- we are not sure of which show). In fact, many teachers even explained *why* they held different expectaions (e.g., boys are more active; they are better in math) without giving much thought to the cumulative effect of these differences. Yet, we contend though that teachers and schools are more willing to examine gender differences rather than racial differences since they are somewhat less threatening.

3. Socioeconomic status (SES) -- As with gender issues, many people feel more comfortable dealing with SES rather than race. Certainly, both are interrelated and affect teacher expectations. Lower expectations generally held for children from low SES. Kathleen Wilcox's (1982) ethnographic study demonstrated how teachers systematically, but unconsciously channel children into different vocational paths (blue vs. white collar).

4. Student Achievement -- Using students' past achievement as a basis for teacher expectations makes sense, but is not always founded. It is often said that more children fail in the teachers' lounge than anywhere else. The meaning of this statement is that teachers often discover information about students' past performance long before the students enter their (teachers') classrooms. It is incumbent upon educators to continuously examine and reassess the amount of effort put forth by all children and realize that achievement is dynamic. Since children are continuously developing, tracking is not recommended.

5. Personality --Teachers tend to hold higher expectations for students with salient (outgoing) personalities. Quiet children are often overlooked or not expected to make valuable contributions in class. Educators must realize that whether or not a child feels free to talk in classrooms may be related to cultural issues.

6. Seating Location -- When classes are organized in a traditional seating arrangement with the teacher in the front, teachers may hold higher expectations for children in the front of the class since they are in the "action zone" and interacted with more.

7. Physical Attractiveness -- (based on societal standards of beauty) When the macro society defines what beauty is, it is easy to figure out what beauty is not. If beauty is long, blonde hair, then it is not short, black, kinky hair. Teachers hold higher expectations for children who are physically attractive. Types of clothing also influence teachers' beliefs.

8. Writing Neatness -- Teachers who value neat penmanship hold higher expectations for children who write neatly. Interestingly, in a number of

studies, when teachers who valued neat handwriting were shown identical content written in different levels of neatness, teachers judged the papers with neater handwriting higher and expected the children to be "smarter."

9. Speech Characteristics-- dialect vs. standard English (incidentally, the vast majority of us use dialects at some time or other) . Teachers often mistakenly equate speech characteristics to intelligence. Therefore, higher expectations are often held for children who speak standard English. Lisa Delpit (1986; 1988; 1991) makes the case for teaching children to speak standard English so that they will have a better chance at being successful in school.

10. Body Odor or Other Physical Characteristics -- If the reader has read or heard "Teddy's Story," (an anecdotal account of the effect of low teacher expectations), the description of Teddy's odor was a salient factor in the teachers' feelings about him. Whether we admit it or not, such characteristics affect our attitudes. Without a concerted effort to treat children fairly, it is easy to treat such children unequitably.

11. Combination of any of the above factors -- As we noted earlier, many of these factors are interrelated. Based on what we know about teacher expectations, envision the treatment of a black females (from low SES, who has a poor achievement record, is quiet, sits in the back, is not physically attractive, writes poorly, speaks Black English vernacular, and smells bad) in many classrooms. How would these factors affect a teacher's interactions with the child?

C. Teacher-Child Interactions -- Teacher expectations and interactions are inevitably related. Although teacher-student interactions can be directly observed, interaction *patterns* are often more difficult to

detect. Without careful observation, the quality of teacher interactions is often not brought to the surface. We will briefly discuss six considerations that teachers can use to examine the nature of their interactions with children: 1) positive vs. negative reactions, 2) frequency of interactions, 3) nonverbal communication, 4) differences in grouping patterns, 5) labeling, and 6) reaction time.

We encourage teachers to videotape themselves since most educators think that they treat all children fairly. One of our favorite examples of the effectiveness of videotaping involved a mature preservice teacher who had received consistent feedback about her lack of enthusiasm from her cooperating teacher and college supervisor. However, the student continued to view herself as an enthusiastic person. When she was finally videotaped during her student teaching experience, she exclaimed, "Am I really that boring?" Seeing is believing!

Teacher Interactions: Issues to Consider

We hasten to point out that there are many positive things that teachers do in the classroom; however, the following section focuses on issues that teachers can examine in order to more effectively give all children an equal chance of success in school regardless of their ethnic persuasion.

1. Positive vs. Negative Reactions --When examining treatment of children from various races, we strongly suggest that teachers routinely make mental notes or keep written records on the frequency of their positive vs. negative reactions to children. Many teachers are surprised to discover that some children consistently receive postitve or negative responses from them. Peer observations by other teachers may also provide additional insight about interaction patterns.

2. Frequency of Interactions -- Closely related to the quality of responses is the *quantity* of responses that children receive from their teachers. Because it is relatively easy to unconsciously interact with children differentially (due to a number of factors such as differences in student personalities), many teachers find it helpful to devise methods to ensure that they interact with all children each day regardless of race, SES, gender, etc. Sheila Hanley, a fourth-grade teacher in South Carolina, says that she routinely places all children's names in a box and makes sure that every child is called on at least once daily by randomly selecting names from the box throughout the day. A high school teacher who we met at a conference noted that she assigns a student to serve as classroom monitors on each row in her class. The classroom monitors are in charge of alerting the teacher to students who have not been called on during the day. These examples emphasize the necessity of making a conscious effort to overcome unintentional interaction biases.

3. Nonverbal Communication-- Often, our nonverbal communication sends powerful, subtle (covert) messages to children. Teachers smile more at some students and demonstrate impatience more with others. When nonverbal communication conflicts with verbal responses, students often read the nonverbal responses as well as what the teacher says. For example, a teacher who exclaims, "Very Good!" while frowning with her arms crossed tightly might convey mixed messages to students.

4. Differences in Grouping Patterns-- Teachers are encouraged to closely examine the composition of their low ability groups (if applicable). If they are comprised mostly of children of color, there may be a problem. Additionally, teachers may reflect on whether children in high ability

groups receive more or less positive responses. It is interesting that teachers often take credit for children's progress in high ability groups. For example, when children do well, we often proudly state, " *I* taught him/her. " On the other hand, when they do poorly, we say, "*He/she* can't learn." It is not uncommon for children's cultural patterns of behavior (e.g., speech and other cultural idiosyncratic responses) to interfere with grouping patterns. As Heath (1982) and Irvine (1990) point out, when teachers and students lack cultural synchronization, behaviors that are encouraged and reinforced at home are frowned upon at school. In other words, a child who is viewed to be precocious at home may be considered "below average" in school. Teachers need to examine to what degree cultural styles affect their grouping of children. Classrooms should be inclusive and show respect for many different cultural styles while extending children's orientation. Interestingly, when cultural chasms exist between teachers and students, students often view teachers behaviors as atypical (Boutte & McCormick, 1992; Heath, 1992).

5. Labeling -- Often children of color are negatively labeled as "low ability," "slow," "quiet," etc. (Boutte, LaPoint, & Davis, 1993; Heath, 1982). Heath (1982) discovered that African American children who were labeled as quiet at school were definitely not quiet at home. It would behoove teachers to examine their use of labels for all children -- not just children of color. Being familiar with children's home settings adds insight into a holistic understanding of children. Instead of focusing on weaknesses, teachers can instead focus on strengths that children possess. The behavior of children of color should be examined and appreciated in terms of what is typical for their culture rather than in comparison to the majority culture.

6. Reaction Time -- Another way that teachers respond differently to children in classrooms is the amount of reaction time allowed for children. AAUW's study illuminated this issue. When teachers consistently wait longer for certain children to respond and provide more prompting and cues to particular children, children draw inferences about the type of expectations that teachers hold. Typically, they respond according to what they conclude that expectation is (self-fulfilling prophecy). Many African American children learn very early that if they pause a minute, the teacher will go to the next child. Typically, around fourth grade African American children, especially males, stop putting forth effort and begin volunteering less in the classroom (Hale-Benson, 1986; Kunjufu, 1985, 1986, 1990).

D. Curiculum Relevance/Inclusion -- Although schools are rapidly changing to address diversity, most schools operate from an Eurocentric paradigm which does not validate the accomplishments of people of color. Transforming curricula into a multicultural focus requires numerous changes in attitudes, perspectives, and curricula. We do not recommend a few additions to the curriculum; rather, we advocate holistic transformation of the curriculum so that it is inclusive and integrated throughout the year (Boutte & McCormick, 1992). A few suggestions are made below.

1. All aspects of the curriculum needs to be included such as: books, videos, plays, holidays, field trips (e.g., ethnic museums as well as general museums). Regardless of whether the setting is homogeneous or hetergeneous, schools should show appreciation of all cultures. There is a proliferation of multicultural materials available;

however, many teachers lament that it is exceedingly time consuming to locate and obtain these materials. The sole responsibility of seeking multicultural curricula materials should not lie only on teachers. School districts that are serious about multiculturalism will select textbooks and other materials that reflect diversity so that teachers will not be overwhelmed and discouraged when trying to seek information. Additionally, parents and other community members can be excellent resources for providing materials and references. Contributions of many ethnic groups such as: Latino artists, African American poets, African scholars and inventors, etc. need to be integrated into the curriculum. Again, we emphasize that such information should not be presented in isolated units as if it is merely unique, add-on tidbits. Rather, it should be thoroughly integrated throughout the curriculum as is other relevant content.

It is imperative that children of color see themselves in books and in the curriculum. Presently, many children of color are exposed to a sense of invisibility in the classroom. They need to know that role models exist and that they (children) can be a presidents (or politicians), teachers, writers, inventors, or anything that they aspire to be. Eurocentric curriculum subtly, but powerfully, teaches European American children that they are superior. Reinforcing false and stereotypical information about a race is damaging in the long run for all children-- white or

otherwise (Howard, 1993). Curricula should help children seek the truth about their history as well as the history of others.

2. Bulletin boards and classroom displays should be examined to determine if they represent diversity (racial, gender, physical abilities, etc.). One common technique used is the "token" approach where one person of color is displayed amidst a large group of whites (Derman-Sparks, 1989). Although negative racial *attitudes* are probably more damaging and sustaining than negative visual images and depictions, care should be given to include images of people of color as well as whites. Additionally, bulletin boards should be examined for stereotypical depictions of racial groups.

   Cultural artifacts can also be displayed in the classroom such as African sculptors, Chinese vases, Mexican blankets, and so forth. A wide range of artifacts should be used to avoid presenting a narrow view of various cultural groups. Parents frequently are willing to share personal collections of artifacts from their cultures.

3. Omission, distortion, and reduction of content information is another covert way of excluding various racial and cultural groups. It is imperative that curricula include multiple perspectives rather than a purely Eurocentric perspective (Stage One on Table 1) -- as is typically the

case. For example, the perspectives of Native Americans are seldom included when discussing "The First Thanksgiving." Resource persons from respective racial and cultural groups who are knowledgeable of historical and current perspectives should be invited into classrooms. The intent is not to pit one perspective against the other, but in the quest for a more authentic curriculum, students should be apprised that there are multiple and/or contrasting viewpoints and interpretations. A close examination of the numerous myths and stereotypes that are perpetuated in classrooms point to the necessity of presenting multiple perspectives in classrooms.

4. Frequently, schools reinforce stereotypes -- racial and otherwise. While we all hold stereotypes, teachers must be aware of subtle ways negative stereotypes are reinforced in the classroom. For example, it is not uncommon for students to make stereotypical remarks about a particular racial groups during everyday conversation (i.e., Chinese people do well in math; African Americans are good athletes). Teachers must be careful not to condone such remarks and must be prepared and willing to discuss these issues in a nonthreatening, manner. Many teachers ignore such remarks because of their own discomfort (Boutte, LaPoint, & Davis, 1993). Admittedly, it is sometimes best to ignore inappropriate remarks; however, teachers cannot allow stereotypes to be perpetuated in classrooms.

Native Americans are frequently stereotyped in classrooms and we have found that young children learn little authentic information about the multifaceted nature of Native American cultures. Many children erroneously are led to believe that all Indians live in teepees and wear headbands with feathers. Consequently, most children have little, if any, conception of contemporary Native Americans. Indeed, we often limit the range of information presented about many groups including European Americans. Seldom do children see images of low income whites in books and other materials. Contrastingly, when schools limit the information that they present, they reinforce stereotypes such as African Americans tend to be on welfare, are drug users, and live in single family homes. Additionally, because of misinformation or incomplete information, students exit schools with stereotypes such as Africans live in villages and all Asians excel in mathematics.

E Sensitivity to Racial Issues -- As noted by Boutte, LaPoint, & Davis, (1993), racial issues will undoubtedly emerge in classrooms. Teachers must become more cognizant of overt and covert racial slurs and defamations. In light of the racial disharmony in this country, teachers must bring racial issues to the forefront and confront them -- especially since teachers have such a tremendous influence on young children's racial attitudes. Teachers need to be sensitive to racial issues that affect the response patterns of children of color in integrated classrooms. For example, if children are in the minority, they may try to shed any of their natural cultural overtones in an effort to "fit in" and not call undue

attention to themselves. If children of color do not see role models and images of themselves in classrooms, they may infer that there is something shameful about their race. Additionally, teachers need to be prepared to address situations when racial defamations or jokes are used in their classrooms (e.g., nigger or Polack).

Other issues that need to be examined are selections of children for school plays, speeches, awards, etc. How does race play a part in these? What messages are children being taught if all of the children of color are consistently placed on the back row during a performance? The intent here is for teachers to be more aware of such issues that send powerful messages. For example, teachers must consider how they determine which students receive major speaking roles? Who gets selected for class queen, king, or student of the week? Many teachers are relunctant to include race as a consideration when making such selections because they delude themselves that they will choose the *best* students. Little thought is given to the fact that all students need to be provided with an opportunity to succeed, and that with practice, most children can excel and be *the best students*. Moreover, the influence that factors such as students' speech and cultural patterns has on the selection process are not systematically considered. While we are certainly not suggesting a token approach, we definitely think that the role that race plays in these issues should be considered. There are many qualified students of color; however, a Eurocentric-driven "system" often excludes their access. Similar to the concept of Affirmative Action, when equity does not exist in classrooms, a mechanism for achieving it must be devised. As Afrocentric schools demonstrate, when given a chance and high expectations, children of color rise to the expectations.

F. Parent-School Interactions -- Finally, we want to mention the importance of involving all parents in school activities. The quality of parent-school interactions are crucial to students' success in school. Yet, schools often react differentially to parents depending on a number of factors such as race and SES. Schools must examine how they welcome or "un" welcome parents. How do the secretary, teachers, administrators, and other school staff greet and interact with parents? Is correspondence written in a respectful versus a derogatory manner? Finally, home visits are recommended to assist teaches in understanding and appreciating children's home environment (LaPoint, Boutte, Swick, and Brown, 1993) .

Summary

The discussion of racial issues remains a difficult topic, but we need to discuss it to move beyond a single perspective approach that is obviously not beneficial to children of color or European American children. Demographers predict that by the year 2020, children of color will make up approximately 46 percent of the nation's school-age population (Banks, 1993). As the overt factors indicate, schools are currently not meeting the needs of children of color. Children's school experiences will inevitably affect their future success (or failure) in life. Joanne Hendrick asserts that everybody thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing themselves. As teachers who have a tremendous influence over our students lives, we must make a conscious and continuous effort to equitably educate all children regardless of their race. Both the real and imagined issues that we have addressed send powerful messages to children. When we teach European American children that they are superior to other groups, we cripple all of us since we ultimately must all learn to live on this earth together. Children can be *different* from each other without being inferior to others.

The overt evidence which clearly indicates discrepancies between children is compelling and sends powerful messages about current perpectives on racial issues. Unless teachers are able to recognize (without overreacting) subtle racial attitudes, we submit that teachers (regardless of race) will be unwillingly engaged in a powerful form or systematic racism. Depending on one's perspective, the issues discussed here may seem unreal or contrived. We encourage you to use the lenses that we have provided and decide for yourself if the issues are real or imagined.

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